



English Department Newsletter

University of Southern Maine



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Meet our Alumni

Alisa Spiegel Burris worked for 12 years at various Chicago television stations, won numerous awards—including a local Emmy—and eventually took on management roles in her field. In 2007 she returned to Portland and worked as the Promotion Manager at WGME-TV. During this time she was in charge of on-air promos as well as commercial production. She is now back in the Chicago area and hoping to go to graduate school in the fall to pursue a Master's Degree in English.



Alisa attended USM from 1988 through 1992, majored in English and loved every second of it. While taking classes, she wrote feature stories for *The Free Press* and was also active in the English Students Association. One year after graduation she was employed at WGME-TV as a Marketing Assistant, where she began her career as a Writer/Producer/Editor of on-air promos. Two years later she moved to Chicago to write, produce and edit promos for a twenty-four hour cable channel.

Her experience at USM not only helped lay down the foundation for her television writing career but also inspired her to learn as a reader, grow as a writer, and look forward to continuing her education as a lover of great literature.

Erik Frenz is a journalist currently writing for the *Bleacher Report*, a sports website. He is an NFL divisional lead writer covering the AFC East. He has been writing for *B/R* full time for over a year and recently started contributing part-time to *Boston.com* as a Patriots blogger.



Erik graduated from USM in 2008 with grand dreams of being an English teacher.

Then these dreams vanished after his first teaching experience. He writes, "Things didn't click for me until after I graduated, when I realized I wanted to be a sports writer. I took what I love (football), mixed it with what I learned (writing), and that became the goal. I came upon an unpaid internship opportunity to be an editor for an up-and-coming sports website called *Bleacher Report* which led to a freelance writing opportunity, as I became a Patriots featured columnist. I also did freelance work for *Cold Hard Football Facts* and another internship at NESN.

The dynamic of journalism and media is changing, thanks to new media and the Internet. The path is not always straight, and is not the same as it was a decade ago, or even five years ago. Patriots beat writer Tom E. Curran of CSN New England once told me, 'Follow your instincts.' That's the best advice I have heard in this field."

Elizabeth Peavey is a prizewinning writer, teacher and performer—and has been using her English degree since the day she graduated. Her one-woman show, *My Mother's Clothes Are Not My Mother*, premiered in Portland, Maine, in September of 2011 to sold-out houses and is currently on tour. She is the author of *Glorious Slow Going: Maine Stories of Art, Adventure and Friendship*, which was a finalist for the John M. Cole Maine-themed Nonfiction Award in the 2012 Maine Literary Awards. She is also the author of *Outta My Way: An Odd Life Lived Loudly* and of *Maine & Me*, which was awarded the Maine Literary Award for Best Maine-themed Book. Since 1993, her writing has been featured in *Down East* magazine, where she is a contributing editor. Her monthly humor column, "Outta My Yard," can be found at thebollard.com. She has taught public speaking at USM since 1993; she has also taught creative nonfiction at



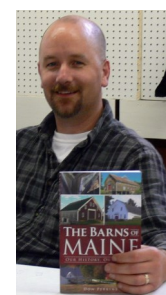
Photo courtesy of Shoshannah White

the University of Maine at Farmington, as well as countless workshops for the Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance. She is a frequent guest lecturer and speaker at schools, libraries and associations across the state.

Don Perkins recently published a book, *The Barns of Maine, Our History, Our Stories* (2012). The book came out last September and is already in its second printing. (The first run was 1200 copies.) Don says, "I love going on Amazon or a local bookstore and seeing my own work there. I am speaking all over the state and will be at this fall's "SAGE" series at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute."

Don graduated from USM in 2006 with a degree in English. He says, "Writing is a career I never expected to pursue. I originally enrolled at USM to become a "shop teacher" (it was called Technology Education in 2002). However, I soon discovered the level of mathematics involved in that program to be absolutely daunting. I needed a tutor for every math class I took. Perhaps it was the 13-year lapse since my high school days.

In a strange rediscovery of myself, I found I excelled in and enjoyed my English and writing classes so much that I switched majors. I discovered the many genres and was fascinated by the English program's depth. Looking back, I thank the professors who urged me to reach beyond my comfort zones.



I realize USM gave me more than just an education; it has given me the necessary tools to build a real sense of identity. To be successful in writing, perseverance is key. The right educational foundation is equally important. If you are willing to persevere, USM will provide the opportunities necessary to succeed. You can't put a price on that."

English Faculty Profile

Eve Raimon



Professor Raimon at MLK Event, January 16, 2012

Professor Eve A. Raimon joined the USM English Department in the Spring of 2012 after teaching for many years in the Arts & Humanities Program at the Lewiston Auburn campus. She teaches cultural studies, African American literature and culture, Nineteenth Century American literature, newswriting, and critical race theory. She also teaches race and gender courses for the American and New England Studies Program, Women & Gender Studies, EYE, and the online Liberal Studies in the Humanities degree. Her areas of scholarly interest are 19th-century American and African American women writers, cultural studies and new media, and public memory and African American history.

Her current book project with Cassandra Jackson, Professor of English at the College of New Jersey, is *Beyond the Black Heritage Trail: Race, Place, and Public Memory in New England*, a study of the cultural meaning behind the burgeoning number of African American memorials across New England. Prof. Raimon received a 2013 Faculty Senate Research Grant to fund travel to various sites around New England to gather material for the book.

In addition, a recent essay Prof. Raimon co-authored with Bates professor Melinda Plastas, "Brutality and Brotherhood: James Baldwin and Prison Sexuality," will be appearing in a forthcoming special issue of *The African American Review*. It examines Baldwin's association with prison reform activism in his fiction and non-fiction, as well as his direction of a Canadian play in Istanbul, Turkey in the early '70s about a boy's penitentiary.

She also swims the 2.4-mile Peaks-to-Portland swim every summer because "it's the farthest thing from academic writing" that she can imagine.

Department Honors Part-Time Faculty

Lindsay Dorney was a vital part of the English Department and the Women's Studies Program for 17 years. Known to be a tough and rigorous teacher, she created a variety of intellectually challenging and rewarding classes that utilized her scholarly interests in the areas of women and science, feminist theory, Canadian and Asian women writers. We want to thank Lindsey for all she has done for our department and the University as a whole.



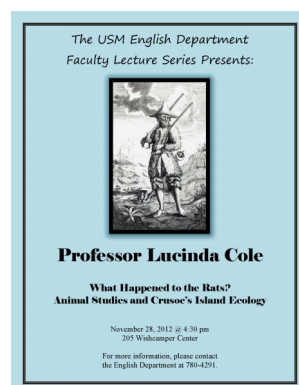
Professors Ben Bertram and Lindsay Dorney



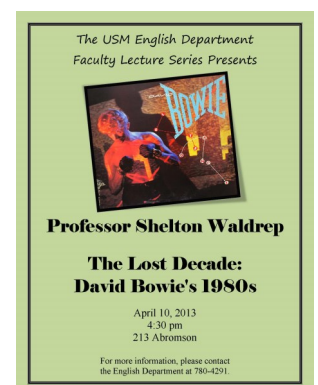
Faculty Lecture Series

In the fall of 2012, the Faculty Lecture Series began for the faculty to share and celebrate their research.

Professor Lucinda Cole presented the first lecture, ***What Happened to the Rats? Animal Studies and Crusoe's Island Ecology***, on November 28, 2012. Her lecture was drawn from her forthcoming book, *Imperfect Creatures: Vermin, Literature, and the Sciences of Life*.



Professor Shelton Waldrep presented the second lecture, ***The Lost Decade: David Bowie's 1980s***, on April 10, 2013. He is currently working on a book project on David Bowie, entitled "Future Nostalgia: Performing David Bowie."



Scholarship Winners



Jennifer Balser I think everyone should go to school when they are older—it's much more fun. I say that now, but when I was contemplating coming to USM, I was fearful. I had been a stay-at-home mom for a long time and I wasn't sure if I would remember how to write a sentence, let alone a paper, but I wanted the challenge. I knew before I began my studies that English would be my major, and though there are moments, usually in Critical Theory classes, that I ask myself what was I thinking, I have no regrets. I am so appreciative of being a recipient of the CAHS Scholarship. Whether my education leads to better employment when I graduate or not, the education I have received has been beneficial to me and my family. Thank you. **Dean's Scholarship 2013**

Sidney Dritz I've known I wanted to be an English major for about as long as I've understood what a major actually was. My major has stuck to me through three schools in three states, and I've never once regretted it. I have a lot of ideas about what I want to do when I graduate—a lot of places I want to go and things I want to try, but one thing I've always been sure of is that no matter where I end up, my English degree will serve me well, because even more than any of the books I have read, or papers or stories I have written, my major is teaching me how to think, and I love the way I can feel my mind being shaped by it. **Jandebeur Scholarship 2013**

Jacob Lowry The study of English has been and continues to be incredibly important to me. At a time in which some question the value of humanities programs, I strongly believe that the countless voices, experiences and socio-historical contexts I've encountered at USM have been integral to my personal development. I am indebted to the wonderful faculty at USM who have challenged me to broaden my horizons and have taught me that learning doesn't end on graduation day. With an uncertain future before us, the humanities must be defended by those who understand that the world is more than a series of dollar signs. **Treworgy Scholarship 2013**



Philip Shelley Last semester I was the grateful recipient of the C. Elizabeth Sawyer Scholarship, which goes to a Senior USM English Major who intends to enter the teaching profession and do graduate study in English. To apply for this scholarship, you need to submit an essay. I think that this is an incredibly pivotal time in the world of academia and education, and I feel incredibly lucky to find myself in the thick of it, so I wrote about that in my essay. There is perhaps no other major area of our society where so many culturally critical issues are currently being so hotly contested: the proper uses and limits of technology; the rapidly evolving demographic and linguistic makeup of the US; the battle over whether certain institutions should be publicly or privately held; and whether or not profit and efficiency must always and everywhere triumph over oppositional values such as free rational inquiry and creative exploration untethered from dictates of the profit motive and the clock. These issues are central to both the future of our society and the future of this very institution—public universities such as USM are at the forefront of these transformations. I feel very fortunate that, as an undergraduate, I have already been given several interrelated opportunities to start grappling with some of these issues. **Sawyer Scholarship 2012**

Poet Richard Blanco



On Monday, January 21, 2013, after President Barack Obama made his inaugural address, but before Beyoncé sang the National Anthem, poet Richard Blanco read his inaugural poem, "One Today." Television commentators around

the world informed their audiences that this Cuban American writer lived in Maine. This wasn't news to a group of USM students who attended Blanco's reading the previous fall. On October 3, 2012, a small contingent of students, including members of Betsy Sholl's Poetry Workshop (ENG 303), listened to Blanco read for thirty minutes. Afterwards, he took questions from the audience and autographed his books—*City of Fires* (University of Pittsburgh Press), *Directions to the Beach of the Dead* (University of Arizona Press), and his newest book, *Looking for the Gulf Motel* (University of Pittsburgh Press).

O'Brien Poetry Event

The Department of English hosted the annual O'Brien Poetry Event on November 9, 2012 with David Wojahn, the winner of the 2012 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize. Wojahn is the author of eight collections of poetry. He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim

Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, the Illinois Arts Council, and the Indiana Arts Commission. *Interrogation Palace: New and Selected Poems 1982-2004* (2006) was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry, and winner of the Folger Shakespeare Library's O.B. Hardison Award. Wojahn teaches poetry at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia.



IN MEMORIAM ~ PROFESSOR L. MORRILL “BO” BURKE

L. Morrill “Bo” Burke, who taught in the USM English Department from 1959 until 1989, died on February 12, 2013. He served in Europe during World War II and attended Bowdoin on the GI Bill afterward. He held an M.A. degree from the University of Washington and a Ph.D. from Columbia University. Bo was part of the faculty in 1970 when the University of Maine at Portland merged with Gorham State Teachers College to form the University of Maine at Portland-Gorham (UMPG), which was renamed the University of Southern Maine in 1978. He was chair of the Department of English in the 1980s. As an English professor Bo was avidly concerned with the quality of education in Maine. In the 1950s he bought property on Long Island in Casco Bay, building a cabin there and later adding a winterized house. He spent his summers and all of his retirement on the island and was well known for his gatherings of USM faculty at his home in Portland and for hosting lobster bakes on Long Island. Bo was an accomplished tennis player, winner of the over-55 Maine State Tennis Championship. He hung out with lobstermen and boatmen in Casco Bay, and is fictionalized as Mat Burns in Alix Kates Shulman’s 1995 novel, *Drinking the Rain*.



Faculty Publication and News

Congratulations to Professor Justin Tussing! He was awarded tenure and promoted to Associate Professor. Professor Tussing is the Major Advising Coordinator in the English Department, the Director of the Stonecoast Writers’ Conference and coordinates the event Celebrate Writers as well as the USM Reading Series.

The Women and Gender Studies Program has established a new award in honor of English **Professor Nancy Gish**. The “Nancy K. Gish Award for Outstanding Feminist Practice” has been awarded to Gabriel Demaine, the Coordinator for Diversity and Inclusivity Programming at USM.

Ben Bertram’s most recent article, “*Measure for Measure* and the Discourse of Husbandry,” has just been published in the journal *Modern Philology* 110:4 (Spring 2013). The article looks at Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* in relation to the politics and economics of reproduction or what he calls “state husbandry.” Husbandry—the household management of money, land, procreation, and marital relations—was crucial to the state’s attempts to control sexual appetite and reproduction in early modern England.

Lucinda Cole presented a paper entitled “Swarming Animals, The Plagues of Egypt and the Sensitive Soul” at the Modern Language Association in January, and another—“Gone to the Dogs: The Ecology of St. James’s Park”—at the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies in April. She has been asked to serve on the editorial board of *Configurations*, a journal devoted to literature and science, published by the Johns Hopkins University Press.

Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T.S. Eliot, a collection of essays edited by Cassandra Laity and **Nancy Gish**, continues to receive attention from scholars. Patrick Query in *Time Present* (Spring 2013), a newsletter about Eliot, writes, “The attribution of desire, albeit “discarnate” or “mimetic” desire, is an effective way to lift the lid on some of a poet’s mysteries, and this book’s sustained reflection on the theme of homoeroticism constitutes a further significant step in the direction of putting flesh on the dry bones of the inherited Eliot.”

Bud McGrath has recently received a Faculty Senate Research Grant to conduct research on Ireland’s Field Day Theatre Company at the National Library in Dublin, Ireland. Field Day arose out of the troubles in Northern Ireland and produced plays that toured all of Ireland from 1980 to the early 1990s. Field Day’s board of directors included Ireland’s foremost writers, critics, and actors, including Brian Friel, Seamus Heaney, Seamus Dean, and Stephen Rea. In addition to an annual theatrical production, Field Day also published a number of books and pamphlets, including the monumental *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* that played a major role in the cultural politics of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s. Many of Field Day’s positions are reflected in the 1998 Belfast Agreement that ended the major hostilities in Northern Ireland. A complete archive of Field Day’s activities was donated to the National Library of Ireland and has recently been catalogued and made available to scholars. Prof. McGrath had completed a book-length study of Field Day prior to these materials becoming available and will travel to Dublin in May and June to access the new materials and incorporate them into his book.

Eve A. Raimon had “Chains on Black Flesh”: Incarceration, Race, and Sexual Alterity in James Baldwin” accepted for a forthcoming special issue of *The African American Review*. She wrote the essay with collaborator Melinda Plastas in the Women’s Studies Program at Bates College. She also published “Making Up Mammy: Representing Historical Erasure and Confounding Authenticity in Cheryl Dunye’s *The Watermelon Woman*” in *Too Bold for the Box Office: Mockumentaries from Big Screen to Small*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group (2012).

